

COMMENTS RECEIVED BY EMAIL ON 10/15/2021, FROM TOM KNEIL, BOARD OF DIRECTOS MEMBER FOR THE ARKANSAS RIVER COALITION

The Arkansas River Coalition (ARC) is pleased to be able to comment on the Draft of the 2021 State Water Plan. Even though we are focused on the Arkansas River and its watershed, our interest extends to all of Kansas. Furthermore the ARC is known primarily through our promotion of float trips our wider concern is the health and vitality of the waters of the state and in that light we offer the following:

From the draft of the Water Plan:

“Recreation is a growing economic role of reservoirs, with several million visitors annually (Figure 2) participating in on-water and on-shore activities. This provides millions of dollars in economic benefits from visitor expenditures within the state. With more cities looking to develop riverfront recreational areas, maintaining reservoir water supply will allow for sufficient streamflow for recreational activities. [p.32]

Acknowledgement of the economic benefits of water-based recreation is welcome but should also include river recreation. Kansas water law restricts public use of rivers to the Arkansas River, the Kansas River, the Missouri Rover as it borders the state and the river reaches that are within the boundaries of federal and state reservoirs. Although it is not in the purview of the Water Office/Water Authority, we are compelled to observe here that current water law in Kansas in this regard needs to be changed. Kansas has relatively few opportunities for river recreation and expanding access to rivers throughout the state would be economically advantageous to the state and local communities.

Again, from the draft Water Plan:

- The [KDHE list of impaired waters](#)⁽²⁾ identified:
- 86% of state’s assessed stream miles are impaired for one of these uses - aquatic life, contact recreation, or food procurement.
 - Over 96% of the state’s assessed lakes are impaired for one of these uses - aquatic life, contact recreation, or food procurement.
 - Less than 5% of the state’s assessed wetlands support aquatic life and recreational uses.

These numbers are completely unacceptable and in our opinion are appalling. The state simply has to do better and it is our view that more attention should be paid to the problems leading to these conditions. Water is the life-blood of Kansas. WRAPS is a great program but unfortunately (in our opinion) caters too often to agriculture and gives too little attention and concern to non-agriculture users such as recreational users.

Lastly, we are fully in support of the Priority Goal of the Upper Arkansas Advisory Committee, especially the goal of reestablishing streamflow in the Arkansas River.

It is our hope that increased attention will be given to the use and protection of Kansas waters for recreational use.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment of the draft 2021 Water Plan.

For the Arkansas River Coalition,

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